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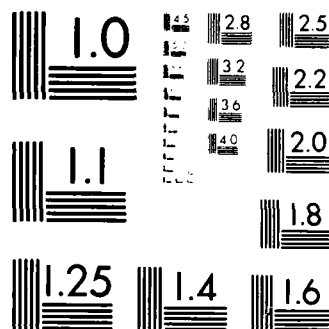
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STUDENT ESSAY

POLITICAL OBJECTIVE DENIAL;
ENHANCING DETERRENCE IN THE NATIONAL STRATEGY

BY

COLONEL GAYLEN C. ROBERTS, USAF

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

POLITICAL OBJECTIVE DENIAL: ENHANCING DETERRENCE IN THE NATIONAL STRATEGY

AN INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

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ABSTRACT

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A systematic method of analyzing and developing measures to deny an opponent's achievement of its political objectives is proposed as a complementary step in determining a national strategy. Political objectives are defined in Clausewitzian terms as the goals of the political arm, with war only the means of reaching them. Deterrence today has two elements -- punishment, which is aimed primarily at the political element, and denial, intended for the military element. Extending denial of objectives to the political decisionmaker enhances deterrence. The process requires three steps. The first consists of determining the full range of potential political objectives. The second requires application of 16 political considerations to each of the possible objectives. The third step is the development of specific means either to insure the opponent is aware of the consequences of his action or to implement measures to make the political costs too high to warrant the use of military force. The situation in Europe is used as an example in developing and explaining the three steps.

POLITICAL OBJECTIVE DENIAL:

ENHANCING DETERRENCE IN THE NATIONAL STRATEGY

In any serious discussion of the balance of military forces in Europe, the question inevitably arises, "What is the probability that the Soviets will use their advantage in numbers to initiate an attack on Western Europe?" The majority of the politico-military experts will reply, "I really don't believe that they will attack in the present situation." If you ask why, your answer will probably be, "I just don't think they will."

How is it that an analyst who can quote numbers, capabilities, firepower, tactics, doctrine, history and dogma must rely on intuition when it comes to the bottom line? I suggest that our current method of analyzing the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Western world has concentrated too heavily on the very visible military situation, ignoring or forgetting the political basis for the existence of military forces. This preoccupation with the "numbers game" is nowhere more evident than in the report by Senator Sam Nunn to the Armed Forces Committee, "NATO: Can the Alliance Be Saved ?" (Nunn 1982) While Senator Nunn went to Europe to "examine the current political and military situation," his analysis and recommendations are based purely on the imbalance of forces in the theater. Here we have a situation where a

decidedly "political" source has produced a completely "military" solution without addressing the political basis for those forces.

The question of whether or not the Soviets will bring their military power to bear is certainly a legitimate one considering their oft-stated goals of a triumph of Communism over the West and the fact that they continue to build on what number of Western observers consider to be an inordinate military advantage, despite the debilitating effect continued high military expenditure is likely to have on their domestic economy. It is difficult to believe that such power and sacrifice do not have some final purpose. Ensuring our own security demands that we face such a possibility, however foreign to our own thinking.

The intuitive feeling expressed by many that the Soviets would not attack Western Europe suggests a subconscious understanding of the nature of any Soviet political decision that inevitably would have to be made prior to the initiation of military aggression. Nevertheless, there is a hesitancy in the West to address political objectives because of the inherent difficulty of knowing your adversary's true intentions-- the concerns and motivations that reside in the deep recesses of the minds of the decisionmaking elites.

It is possible, however, to develop plans for dealing with political

objectives without knowing exact intentions. This can be accomplished by determining the full range of potential political objectives, analyzing what can be done to prevent their achievement, and developing a strategy of deterrence based on the denial of those political objectives.

Political Objectives

To understand the true nature of political objectives, we turn to the explanations offered by Carl Von Clausewitz. His statement that war is "an act of policy" is his most-quoted and well-known point, but one that may have been least understood by the modern world as evidenced by our most recent major wars. Clausewitz stressed again and again that the political objective was the real motive for war, that "war is not a mere act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means." (Clausewitz 1976:80-87)

Today, many tend to think of a political objective as a goal or aim which is political in nature, such as a nation being compelled to adopt a certain ideology, form of government or alliance. Clausewitz had in mind those objectives which were established by the political arm of the government. The political nature of his objective has little to do with its

content, but instead describes where it derives. A nation may seek the occupation of another nation -- a military objective -- but that which it seeks must be a political determination. When Clausewitz says that nations go to war only for some political object, war is a "continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means. The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose." War is not autonomous but always an instrument of policy. (Clausewitz 1976:81-88,605)

"The probable character and general shape of any war should mainly be assessed in the light of political factors and conditions. (Clausewitz 1976:607) The political objective - the original motive for the war - will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires." The political aim does not dictate the military means; it must adapt to the realities of military capabilities. However, the political aim has to be the "first consideration". (Clausewitz 1976:81-87) Yet today, aside from very general references to "attempts to instill Communism," there is little consideration in depth as to what political objectives might be gained by a Soviet attack directly on the West. As a result, current Western strategy deals with deterring the achievement of military objectives, without a full realization of whether or under what

conditions the political decision would be made to employ force.

Deterrence

Today, and at least in the near future, the U.S. is forced into a national strategy based on deterrence for two fundamental reasons -- the military power and potential threat of the Soviet Union and the utter devastation posed by nuclear weapons. There is no current defense against nuclear attack and in an environment of mistrust and competition between world powers, deterrence is the only guarantee of security. Deterrence is not an absolute, however. Over the years it has evolved through several forms whose nature we must understand if we are to attempt to apply deterrence to denying political objectives.

Shortly after the beginning of the nuclear age, Bernard Brodie described deterrence purely in terms of the threat of nuclear retaliation or "punishment." (Brodie 1946:74) With the growing Soviet nuclear capability and the reduced credibility of a punishment which could also be exacted on the US, deterrence began to take on an element of the threat of "denial" of the aggressor's military objectives. (Snyder 1961:14-16) The current NATO strategy of Flexible Response is a combination of the two -- a clear intent to use tactical nuclear weapons if necessary to "deny"

success to a Soviet conventional attack, while threatening an implicit danger of escalation to a "punishing" full nuclear exchange.

The dichotomy of this strategy is that the denial portion is aimed at the military while the punishment element is intended for the political arm. It is possible that one may be deterred while the other is not, resulting in final failure of the strategy. For example, the military leadership, used to hardship and losses, could overlook the the potential devastation of a full strategic barrage in the flush of expected victory on the immediate battlefield. On the other hand, the political element, discounting the credibility of threatened full-scale retaliation, could consider the desired political objective worth the potential loss of some military forces. A deterrence concept which denies political objectives would complement a military strategy by ensuring that the more credible element of denial applied to the political side as well.

A System of Analysis

If we are to develop a strategy which includes denying the achievement of political objectives, we must have a framework for analyzing those objectives. The first step is to determine the full range of potential political objectives your adversary could consider. This list must be

extensive and exhaustive, even to the point of implausibility, to avoid having to fathom exactly what your opponent's intentions might be. This also removes the potential misjudgment of "mirroring," or rejecting an objective as unacceptable -- a judgment your opponent may not share. The second step is to examine the potential results of the use of force which would have to be considered by the political decisionmaker. These considerations should be analyzed in terms of what you perceive to be the outcome and what outcome your adversary might expect. If there is a difference between the two, it must be addressed in the next step. The third step consists of developing both specific counters to influence the political considerations in step two and methods of convincing your opponent to see the expected outcome the same way you do, since his perception will determine the effectiveness of deterrence.

To show how the analysis works, we will look at an example case of developing a strategy for dealing with the current European situation. I won't attempt to include every detail, but each of the elements will be there. Military factors will not be addressed since that has been done in so many other studies.

military intervention in Poland suggests that they are at least aware of the need for other methods.

The Value of Political Objective Denial

Political objective denial offers the opportunity to add greater confidence in and understanding of deterrence as a part of our national strategy to insure our future security. While it can never obviate the need for a military deterrent, constructing a defense that insures your opponent cannot achieve his ultimate aims increases the likelihood of its success. Political objective denial offers the following advantages:

1. It is positive - The countermeasures which deny your opponent's objectives are constructive to your own society, such as reinforcing alliance and national goals, ideals, cooperation, and economic and political stability. The opponent's perception of an offensive capability or intent is reduced. There are also elements of dissuasion, the technique of offering profitable inducements to your opponent, an approach especially popular with many Europeans.
2. It is objective-oriented - Specific achievable objectives can be determined and agreed to by participants and allies.
3. It provides clearer meaning to military objectives - Rather than

have exercised that option. The important fact remains, the decision to use force was never taken, whether as a conscious weighing of all the factors or as a subconscious rejection due to its implausibility. For most of NATO's existence, its military leadership has decried the weaknesses of NATO's forces so that military power could not be considered the sole deterrent.

The decision therefore, whether conscious or subconscious, was probably a complex sifting of what Glenn H. Snyder described as "total cost-gain expectations" affected by factors other than NATO's ability to deny or punish through military force. (Snyder 1961:10) Such a process was seen in the political leadership's reaction to the 1969 Soviet military proposal for a massive nuclear strike to destroy the Chinese nuclear threat. Even a limited strike was disapproved by the Soviet political element for fear of beginning a prolonged war or involving the US. (Shevchenko 1985:164-166) The decision undoubtedly was one based, not on the probable success of the Soviet military, but on the potential ramifications which faced the Soviet government over the long term. While the Soviet decision to use military force to achieve a political objective in Afghanistan raises a question about their ability to assess political outcomes, their willingness to seek a solution other than direct

communicate that attitude to Soviets in all private bilateral contacts.

Long-term opposition - (Same as above.)

Destruction of objective - (Not applicable)

Cost - Emphasize positive economic growth possible through cooperation with West.

World opinion - Where possible, brief friendly allies on Soviet attempts at coercion, relating it to their own future security and seeking support in opposing Soviet actions.

Gains - Show Soviets early on that cooperation benefits would greatly outweigh any gains sought through coercion.

Affect on future goals - Emphasize to Soviets that many of their goals are incompatible with Western society and can never be achieved through force or coercion.

Denying Political Objectives

For forty years now, the Soviets have not attacked Western Europe despite the military force they kept poised there and several rather dire predictions and assessments. It is not enough to say that maybe the Soviets never intended to attack -- Communist philosophy and the Soviet buildup both indicate that, had it been in their best interests, they would

instability of European situation; publicly stress long-term economic gains from force reductions in Europe.

Economic needs - (Same as above.)

Allied support - Encourage where possible closer ties between Western European nations and non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members.

Justification - Emphasize defensive nature of Alliance; increase efforts to discount political viability of subversive movements.

Force required - Maintain a credible NATO military force.

Will of the defender - Improve NATO solidarity, reduce minor bilateral disagreements; anticipate early when coercion is being applied and counter quickly.

Civilian support - (Same as political needs above.)

Civilian opposition - Take every opportunity to strengthen Western goals and ideals; support domestic stability.

Defender's response - Make clear that the present defense posture in Western Europe is a result of relatively lower level of current Soviet political threat, that posture would greatly improve if Soviets attempted to take advantage of the force imbalance.

Allies' response - Encourage NATO political agreement in advance on response to possible Soviet attempts at coercion; insure Allies

nations.

Gains - Elimination of only a part of the possible NATO threat, possibly only temporarily.

Affect on future goals - This political objective would probably be one of the least satisfactory solutions to a perceived Soviet concern, given the Communist insistence on absolute victory; although a temporary objective might be achieved, there would be no assurance that such a condition would lead to a more stable and secure USSR.

Developing Counters to Political Objectives

The third step in our process consists of developing counters to each of the political objectives by devising ways to increase the political or economic costs, strengthen resistance, or make clear to the aggressor the potential consequences of his actions. The result would be a second matrix with the full range of specific actions to be taken to prevent the aggressor from achieving his political designs.

The following is the final step in our example of seeking to negate the coercion objective in our European analysis:

Political needs - Emphasize desire to seek diplomatic solutions to

situation at the end of the operation to continue; most likely , other forms of nuclear or conventional capability would take their place, requiring the achievement of one of the other political objectives, such as coercion or occupation of the European landmass.

Allies' response - Allies not attacked but within NATO would most likely respond as dictated by the Atlantic Charter, particularly if the military mechanism responds quickly in accordance with its operational plans; allies outside of NATO would probably remain uninvolved if the conflict occurred and was over quickly.

Long-term opposition - Any hope of peaceful coexistence with the West would be lost for the foreseeable future; continued threat of further military action would be the only way to prevent a retaliatory reaction.

Destruction of objective - Not a factor.

Cost - Relatively lower costs for the operation but long-term costs due to the necessity of having to maintain a powerful military to counter retaliation.

World opinion - Once the Soviets have demonstrated that they consider military action as their preferred solution to a political problem of this scale, total mistrust of their future plans and intentions would probably occur throughout the free world and most of the non-aligned

accomplished quickly; the political establishment would have to be convinced of the probability of absolute success.

Economic needs - Costs of the operation would be relatively lower; would drastically affect future trade and economic relations with NATO nations and most of the Free World.

Allied support - Would not be required; if early success is realized, the Warsaw Pact allies would quickly support; in the long-term, the support could wither quickly because of the disruption of economic and trade ties.

Justification - Self-defense; would necessitate a prolonged propaganda campaign to paint NATO as a potential aggressor.

Force required - Relatively smaller, specialized force needed, primarily air and airborne; would provide minimal warning indicators.

Will of the defender - NATO's determination to respond in kind is clearly stated; barring a major political shift in Western Europe, its acquiescence can never be guaranteed.

Civilian support - Not required.

Civilian opposition - Not a factor.

Defender's response - If Soviet action were limited to NATO nuclear forces, it is almost impossible to believe that NATO would allow the

Destruction of objective - (Not applicable)

Cost - If the coercion were successful, it is likely the military force needed to achieve it would have to be maintained in order to insure the results were continued.

World opinion - Probably not a factor.

Gains - Dependent on the actual result sought.

Affect on future goals - If coercion were successful, the Soviets would have to depend on that method for all activities in the future since any trust necessary for the diplomatic or political process would be impossible.

The Objective of Eliminating of NATO's Nuclear Threat

Another objective of the Soviet Union might be the surgical conventional or nuclear removal of what it perceives as the nuclear threat posed by NATO. This would be a limited objective which could be accomplished in minimum time with a smaller force, with the threat of using the total power of the Warsaw Pact if NATO responds. This example will address only the conventional attack.

Political needs - Domestic support would not be required if

by NATO forces or the free societies of Western Europe; possibly to support communist, socialist or peace movements in the West.

Force required - An excessively greater size force probably would be necessary if the intent were to cause the West Europeans to "give up;" at least the present force would have to be maintained if a long-term wearing down were planned.

Will of the defender - NATO solidarity, economic success, and domestic stability will limit Soviet success at attempts to intimidate.

Civilian support - (Same as political needs above)

Civilian opposition - Clear understanding and acceptance of Western goals and ideals will strengthen public support for resisting Soviet influence.

Defender's response - If Soviet attempts at coercion are not almost perfectly subtle, Western governments could counter with increased defense buildups to Soviet block interference.

Allies' response - Allies could respond with greater solidarity.

Long-term opposition - Unless Soviet coercion achieved a complete realignment in Western Europe (almost impossible to contemplate), success in one endeavor could lead the Allies to greater future resistance.

the best interests of the US. Such a threat could come in one of many forms, ranging from an ultimatum with a short response time to a slow, insidious displacement of US influence, which we will examine in some detail.

Political needs - Domestic support would not be difficult to maintain due to the structured Communist society; possible long-term dissatisfaction with continued diversion of resources necessary to maintain an excessively large military force in peacetime; possible conflict between the political leadership's desire to exercise pressure on the West in a "political" manner and the military preference to exercise its might and take more direct action.

Economic needs - Continued heavy spending for defense, particularly if it is not being actively employed, could increase domestic dissatisfaction; continued lack of economic success would exacerbate the problem in the long run.

Allied support - Continuing peace and economic success could reduce Warsaw Pact support for Soviet attempts to use military force for coercion; cultural and ethnic ties between East and West Europe could further reduce Soviet attempts to elicit allied support for coercion.

Justification - Primarily to remove the threat to Eastern Europe posed

enhanced or endangered.

The second step requires that each of the possible political objectives in step one be analyzed against these considerations. The result is a matrix (see appendix) of political factors for the full range of potential options employing military force. This is the most difficult phase, since predicting future outcomes is not an exact science. The process of developing a government position, however, will aid greatly in understanding the relationship between military and political objectives, in rationalizing differing points of view on the effects of certain actions, and in formalizing national objectives.

The examples below are representative of the process of how each of the considerations might be analyzed. For the purposes of this exercise we will look at only two of the possible objectives.

The Coercion Objective

There is a continuing fear that the Soviet Union will attempt to use its military power as a way of forcing one or all of the European members of NATO to react in a certain manner, particularly in a way detrimental to

the attack;

Civilian opposition - Degree of defender's resistance;

Defender's response - If the defender is not immediately defeated, will his resistance and rearmament increase?

Allies' response - Degree and type of support provide by the defender's allies; will their resistance and armament increase?

Factors Applicable Following the Conflict

Long-term opposition - Degree of civilian resistance; occupation forces required;

Destruction of objective - Impact if objective must be destroyed rather than seized;

Cost - Potential costs of the operation, particularly to the long-term economy; economic support required to sustain conquered nation;

World opinion - Impact on the nations not directly affected by the attack, particularly non-aligned; future trust, rearmament, or political realignment;

Gains - Geographical areas, natural resources, industries, lines of communication, defense buffer zones, population, trading partners, etc.;

Affect on future national goals - National objectives or vital interests

employing military force to achieve an objective:

Factors Applicable Prior to the Conflict

Political needs - Domestic support or opposition; diverting attention from other domestic difficulties; degree of consensus within the government;

Economic needs - Ability to finance a war; effect on trade, import of strategic materials, and energy resources;

Allied support - Whether or not critical allies will participate, provide access or passage, or actually hinder or tie up forces

Justification - Legal, moral, or dogmatic

Force required - Size of force necessary to achieve the objectives could govern the warning indicators and response time available to the defender; type of force needed to achieve the objective (conventional, nuclear, chemical, etc.) could influence other considerations such as will of the defender or world opinion;

Factors Applicable During the Conflict

Will of the defender - Degree of determination of the government to commit all its resources to defend;

Civilian support - Degree of attacker's civilian support or resistance to

Potential Political Objectives

The following are examples of the political objectives which the Soviet Union might seek through the direct use of its military capability in the European region:

1. To limit damage to the Warsaw Pact and gain any available advantage resulting from a conflict starting accidentally.
2. To coerce any or all of the NATO nations into a certain action through the threat of a military attack.
3. To eliminate the threat posed by NATO forces along the Eastern European border.
4. To seize and occupy a limited area in Western Europe.
5. To eliminate the nuclear forces in Western Europe.
6. To neutralize Western Europe as a political entity.
7. To seize and occupy the entire European landmass.
8. To destroy the whole of Western Europe.

Political Considerations

The following is a representative list of the factors a political decisionmaker would have to consider prior to embarking on a course

simply deterring an attack or denying a geographical position, military strategy would now have a more definite role in support of denying specific political objectives.

4. It helps determine the degree of military capability required - With clearer military objectives, the size and quality of military forces needed can be more properly defined.

5. It encourages political pre-eminence within adversary governments- By orienting its strategy along political lines, a nation diminishes the possibility of its opponent being taken over by the military on the pretext of self-defense.

6. It encourages greater communication - One of the professed strengths of military deterrence is ambiguity of the degree of response to an attack, a quality which is presumed to create some doubt as to the outcome in the mind of the decisionmaker. The difficulty is that the aggressor may not view the ambiguity in the same manner as the deterer, a dangerous miscalculation. On the other hand, political objective denial hinges on the success of communicating clearly to the opponent the consequences of his action, particularly the inability to achieve his desired political outcomes.

For those concerned with the seemingly unending spiral of the arms

race, disturbed by the apparent insanity of mutual assured destruction, distressed with the lack of purposefulness of current military strategies, or troubled by the lack of progress in achieving international understanding that would lead to peace, political objective denial offers a forward step toward a positive, affordable, more secure future.

POLITICAL OBJECTIVE MATRIX

	ACCID. WAR	COERCION	ELIM. BORDER THREAT	SEIZE LIMITED AREA	ELIM. NUCLEAR FORCES	NEUT. WESTERN EUROPE	OCCUPY EUROPEAN LAND	DESTROY WESTERN EUROPE
POLITICAL NEEDS								
ECONOMIC NEEDS								
ALLIED SUPPORT								
JUSTI- FICATION								
FORCE REQUIRED								
WILL OF DEFENDER								
CIVILIAN SUPPORT								
CIVILIAN OPPOSIT.								
DEFENDER RESPONSE								
ALLIES' RESPONSE								
LONGTERM OPPOSIT.								
DESTRUCT. OBJECTIVE								
COST								
WORLD OPINION								
GAINS								
FUTURE GOALS								

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